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VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

Report of the Committee on Women in Industry by the Chairman

CLEO MURLAND

Associate Professor Industrial Education, University of Michigan

General Considerations

Every citizen at the end of his or her period of education (all-day school attendance) should be engaged in some form of productive work. The right type of home-making is productive work of the highest value to the nation, but for a great majority of women there is a considerable period between school attendance and home-making, during which they should engage in some other productive occupation.

The war service of women workers in many types of skilled and unskilled operative and directive work in industry demonstrated beyond further question their ability to assume work calling for a high degree of responsibility and skill. This demonstration of fitness, coupled with the necessity for economic independence of all citizens in a democratic social order, strengthens substantially the claims for the industrial education of women.

Vocational education for trade and industrial occupations should be greatly extended, therefore, in order that each individual girl or woman may be assured the opportunity of doing the highest type of productive work of which she is capable during the period previous to marriage; or if she does not marry, for the period of her working life; or if married and because of widowhood, desertion, childlessness, or some other deviation from normal married life, she returns to industry as a wage-earner.

Nothing less than a recognition of these problems which confront women wage-earners, and serious constructive education to meet them, will insure the best type of womanhood and integrity of workmanship among women workers.

Vocational education for girls and women is a two-fold problem: (a) preparation for wage-earning, and (b) preparation for home-making. This discussion is confined to the problems of vocational education for wage-earning occupations in industrial fields.

Some Facts and Some Problems

1. Women wage-earners now constitute an important factor in industry and the number is increasing both absolutely and relatively.

1900—5,319,397—18.8 per cent of the women over 10 years of age were wage-earners.

1910—8,075,772—23.4 per cent of the women over 10 years of age were wage-earners.

1919, it was estimated that 11,000,000 of the women over 10 years of age were wage-earners.

2. Industries employing women workers represent a wide diversity of industrial employments. The U. S. Census of 1910 (Vol. IV., page 53), lists women workers in every one of the 127 types of employment except locomotive firemen and engineers; plumbers, gas and steam fitters; railroad brakemen and conductors; teamsters; laborers (road and street building); draymen and expressmen; motormen; policemen; sailors and marines. The census of 1920 will reduce this list of exceptions.

3. Women and girls of all ages are wage-earners.

Age of Women Workers	Number at Work	Per Cent	At Work
10 to 13 years	286,946	8.0	1 out of every 12
14 to 15 years	350,140	19.8	1 out of every 5
15 to 20 years	1,847,600	39.9	2 out of every 5
21 to 44 years	4,302,969	26.3	1 out of every 4
45 and over	1,288,117	13.7	1 out of every 7

4. The largest age group of women workers is 14 to 24 years; 24 is generally conceded as the usual age for marriage. The U. S. Census does not offer data to prove or disprove these statements but, in the judgment of many who have worked in this field, the statements are true.

5. Because of the immaturity, lack of training, and the home residence of a considerable proportion of this 14 to 24 year group they have been low-paid workers. Women living away from home and women responsible for family support, brought into competition with this younger group, have been forced to accept wages insufficient to maintain a safe standard of living or to insure protection in case of illness and old age. The facts show that women workers in large numbers are

responsible for the support of dependents. Workers are entitled to wage rates based upon the demands of the job rather than sex.

6. Specialized machines and scientific organization have created two main types of industrial occupations: (a) the operative type in which the worker performs one or more special operations or processes; and (b) the directive type in which a foreman or forewoman directs the work of a number of operatives.

7. Many industries in which young women are employed are organized on a basis of extreme specialization or subdivision of work in which no traditions of apprenticeship exist. Shifting from a specialized operation to work requiring greater skill and responsibility usually involves temporary loss of wages. Because of this condition many women workers remain excessively long on operative specialties, which can be learned in comparatively short periods of time, when their increasing maturity, experience and training should assure them of advancement to better-paid specialties or to directive or more expert work.

8. Women workers (not the individual woman) are now regarded as a permanent factor in industry and not as an emergency labor reserve. Education for industrial occupations, therefore, demands due consideration in a program of vocational education for women which recognizes preparation for wage-earning as well as preparation for home-making.

9. Social disapproval of industrial occupations for women and girls has militated strongly against the development of industrial education. This applies to industrial occupations in which women have long been employed as well as to newer types of work developed under the modern factory system.

10. Women workers since the advent of the factory system have been exploited workers. Because of the prejudice against industrial work, the lack of apprenticeship systems of training, and the slow development of other forms of trade organization among women workers, they have been largely untrained for their work and uninformed about conditions of their labor and the value of that labor.

Protective legislation modifies standards of employment but education is the only means by which workers can be informed about conditions of their labor and trained for their responsibilities and privileges as workers and as citizens.

11. Under the terms of the Federal Vocational Education Act, vocational training is made possible for women and girls

as well as for men and boys. That public approval of industrial education for women and girls has been merely passive is shown by the fact that states and local communities have not taken advantage of available resources. The Third Annual Report of the Federal Board for Vocational Education shows that only the smallest beginnings have been made in the establishment of systematic vocational education for women and girls in industrial fields.

NUMBER OF FEMALE PUPILS ENROLLED IN TRADE OR INDUSTRIAL* SCHOOLS
IN THE U. S. DURING THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 1919

Evening Schools	Part-time Schools	All-day Schools	Total Number
1391	5,340	3,553†	10,284

* Table derived from Table 18, Vol I, page 220, Annual Report of the Federal Board for Vocational Education.

† 1,495 of these students enrolled in Manhattan Trade School were omitted from Federal Board Report.

The complexity of the social, economic and educational problems of vocational education is recognized, but the nature of these problems should insure open-minded study and experimentation in developing and putting into effect an adequate program for industrial education for women and girls commensurate with the importance of the problem. State Boards and the Federal Board for Vocational Education share this responsibility.

12. The states are charged with the responsibility of selecting and training supervisors and teachers for the development of vocational training as provided by the terms of the Federal Vocational Education Act. The supply of women for state and city supervisory positions and for teaching positions in the vocational schools is far below the demand. Lack of supervisors and teachers, in turn, retards the development of vocational schools, and the formulation of desirable courses and standards of instruction.

Solutions of These Problems

1. While in protective legislation, organization of workers, and education of employers and consumers, are to be found some remedies for difficulties encountered by women and girls

in industry, the remedy of most importance is better general education and better vocational education which will insure to women the opportunity to formulate and demand for themselves and others the protection and privileges necessary for successful and satisfactory wage-earning.

2. A considerable part of both these forms of education should be assured prior to the beginning of wage-earning work, but much of it can only be given parallel to the pursuit of such work or during periods when the worker shall voluntarily or involuntarily discontinue wage-earning.

3. Both general and vocational education should give girls an understanding of the conditions of wage-earning work, and the possibilities available for the protection of health, morals, earning capacity and promotion to higher levels of employment.

4. Vocational education should fit the worker to pursue effectively some specialized work, assure advantageous entrance to a wage-earning occupation, and make it clear that employment in one phase of specialized work is but one stage from which she should advance as experience, maturity, and additional training justify advancement.

5. Up-grading vocational education should fit the worker for promotion to more advanced stages of operative work, or directive work, or positions of leadership.

6. Vocational education at the later stages, should fit women, who expect to remain in wage-earning work and those who return to wage-earning when their children have passed beyond the need of mother care, for productive work in occupations which demand maturity, experience, and special training. This should be done in order that these women may not be brought into sharp competition with every young woman worker, no matter what may have been the special training of the latter.

7. Since social approval is essential to the development of vocational education for industrial occupations, it is of utmost importance that educators, employers, and others interested in or responsible for vocational education disseminate authentic information which shall bring about a realignment of social attitudes toward industrial occupations for women and girls. Such social approval will develop a demand for the type of vocational education which results in knowledge of the job, group consciousness, and working integrity among women workers.

8. The states and local communities look to the Federal Board for Vocational Education for help in the development of a constructive program of vocational education for industrial occupations for women, which includes ways and means for developing a demand for industrial education as well as the formulation of courses of study, and dynamic assistance in putting it into operation. This help should be commensurate with the numbers of workers involved and their rights as workers and citizens.

What Must Be Done

1. General education for all girls and boys extending over at least the first eight or ten years of school attendance should be insisted upon in order that intelligent, worthy participation in home and community life may be assured.

2. Vocational education for all workers should be assured in all-day vocational courses before entering wage-earning or in part-time courses which supplement occupational experience and prepare for promotion. While the all-day vocational school or department in most communities serves fewer students than part-time and evening courses, it has been shown that the all-day courses tend to lengthen the school attendance of girls contemplating wage-earning and that vocational preparation tends to create a demand for further trade training and education in part-time or evening trade extension courses.

3. Vocational education supplementing the daily occupation, particularly part-time day courses, should be assured to sixteen or eighteen years of age. When part-time vocational education can be given more effectively and advantageously (without loss of time, with suitable equipment which cannot be duplicated in the school, with a constant supply of new illustrative material with suitable subject-matter from the workrooms) in the business establishment than in the school building, courses should be developed in the places of employment. Instruction that carries its point—that proves its worth in the daily employment—increases the demand for education, both general and vocational. Part-time education is pioneer education. Its success is dependent upon genuine belief in it and effective instruction on the part of the teachers, and persistent distribution of information among employers, parents, and pupils about its aims and functions on the part of educational leaders.

4. Since stimulation, promotion, and development of vocational education is of paramount importance in the ever-widening horizon of women's employment, a staff of workers commensurate with the importance of the problem should be provided by both the State and Federal authorities. Each regional field should have a woman agent for industrial education charged with the duties of stimulating and developing teacher-training courses and all-day, part-time, and evening vocational courses for which the Federal Vocational Education Act provides.

Each state should have a woman in charge of industrial education for girls and women charged with the duty of stimulating and developing the work within the State as outlined by the State Board and approved by the Federal Board for Vocational Education.

5. It is of utmost importance that each state make definite provisions for teacher-training courses for supervisors and teachers for the vocational schools. So long as state and national programs of vocational education depend upon stimulation for their ultimate acceptance and effective operation, definite and sustained effort should be made to attract well-educated, well-trained men and women into the field of vocational education.

CLEO MURLAND, *Chairman*

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Mrs. Iris Prouty O'Leary, Special Assistant for Women's Vocational Work, New Jersey.
Leonora O'Reilly, Women's Trade Union League, New York City.
Florence Simms, Industrial Secretary, National Board, Y. W. C. A., New York City.
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